



The HPD News

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An Overview of HPD's Media Relations Office and the Community Outreach Division



Police Administrator Robert C. Hurst, HPD Media Relations

Media Relations

The Media Relations Office serves as a liaison between the Houston Police Department and the media. It is also responsible for ensuring that police information is released in compliance with the Public Information Act and based upon department resources.

The Media Relations Office's duties encompass responding daily to media and citizens' inquiries about department activities and assisting department personnel by releasing information to the public via the media. In addition, the Media Relations Office maintains the department's Internet Web site and produces the monthly department newsletter, *The HPD News*. The Media Relations Office also notifies the Chief of Police and the Command Staff of news stories or events that affect the city of Houston and the Houston Police Department.

The Media Relations Office is directed by Robert C. Hurst. There are six public information officers and five support staff employees. The public information officers are available to respond 24 hours a day to locations where department personnel need assistance in relaying information to the media such as SWAT scenes or officer-involved shootings.

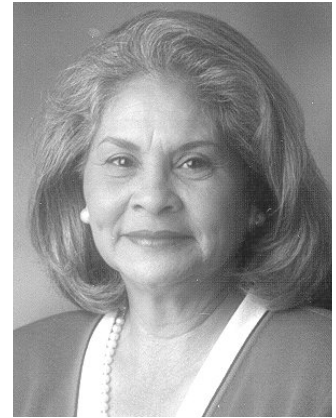
The Media Relations Office is located on the 19th floor at 1200 Travis. The phone number is (713) 308-1800.

Community Outreach

The Community Outreach Division is directed by Yvette Chargois and is comprised of multi-ethnic civilian professionals dedicated to promoting positive relations between HPD and the diverse communities of Houston. The division also seeks to establish and maintain lines of communication between various ethnic groups, emphasizing the effectiveness of working together in reaching common goals and objectives.

Community Outreach identifies and addresses problems that arise between HPD and all segments of the department's service population. The division incorporates into its projects the interests and concerns of all citizens, assuring all members of the community that HPD is concerned with meeting their needs. By developing programs that help address community safety issues and increase citizens' understanding of the activities and role of police officers, public confidence grows and obstacles towards implementing new or existing police programs lessen.

Some of the programs implemented by Community Outreach staff include: Parents and Neighbors Defense Alliance (P.A.N.D.A.), Kids and Cops trading cards, Ministers Against Crime, Youth-Police Advisory Council (Y-PAC), Blocks Organizing Neighborhood Defense (B.O.N.D.), the annual Multi-Cultural Reception, the annual Grandparents' Luncheon, youth workshops and the March on Crime parade. The Community Outreach Division is located on the 21st floor at 1200 Travis. The phone number is (713) 308-9100.



Executive Director Yvette Chargois, Community Outreach Division

Chief's Column

A person who is a victim of a crime can suffer great psychological trauma. In some cases, victims may suffer financial setbacks if they are physically injured during the crime, unable to work, or have no insurance to cover medical or funeral expenses.

Houston police investigators now have help in directing crime victims to the various financial and support services that are available to them. The Houston Police Department Victim Services Unit, formed in July 2001, was part of the success in getting \$8.2 million to 3280 vic-

tims in Harris County last year via the Texas Crime Victims' Compensation Fund.

Prior to the formation of the unit, one person acted as HPD's crime victims' liaison working with victims of crimes including homicides, aggravated assaults, sexual assaults, and traffic and accident cases.

The Victim Services Unit currently consists of Courtney Thornton-Fontenot, who is the director and HPD's crime victims' liaison, three community liaisons, and one executive secretary.

The liaisons provide information and applications for financial assistance, grief coun-

seling, and support services to crime victims and their families. Sometimes investigators get calls from crime victims

who need counseling and support services. By working with crime victims, the liaisons help investigators stay focused on solving their cases.

Employees who know of crime victims in need of assistance can refer them to the Houston Police Department Victim Services Unit at (713) 308-0080.



Chief of Police C.O. "Brad" Bradford

Officer Chillis Honored by Downtown Optimist Club

On February 27, 2001, a man threatened to jump off the Cullen Boulevard overpass at South Loop 610. Officer Priscilla Chillis (Southeast Division) was the first officer on the scene, and the unfolding drama was captured on live television broadcasts. Officer Chillis talked to the man for over an hour. Then, without warning, he lost his balance. Officer Chillis lunged forward, grabbed the man by his clothes, and pulled him to safety.

Officer Chillis was recently honored by the Downtown Optimist Club for her heroism during its annual "Respect for Law Day."

"She risked her life to save him," said Officer Ron Horowitz (Westside Family Violence Unit). "She could have fallen to her death with him. That's going above and beyond the call of duty," said Officer Horowitz.

"I'm a low-key kind of person," said Officer Chillis. "All this attention really caught me off guard. So many people saw what I did. That's just what we (police officers) do."



Officer Priscilla Chillis, Southeast Division

HPD Employees Encouraged to Submit Story Ideas

The Media Relations staff would like to remind HPD employees that this is **YOUR** newsletter. If you have an idea for a story in the *HPD News* or information you think your co-workers would be interested in reading, please share it with us. Just call the Media Relations Office at 713-308-1800 and ask for a public information officer.

Chaplain's Corner

by Chaplain Edward A. Davis

One of the most precious and valuable possessions that each of us has in life is our influence.

Individual influence is present in the home and marketplace, on the job, and with whomever we come in contact.

In our society, there are persons who consciously try to influence us, and there are those who unknowingly influence us merely by their conduct. That is why it is so important to be careful of whom we emulate in life.

Our influence serves as a great reservoir of guidance for those around us, who may knowingly or not make life and death decisions based upon what they have heard or seen in us. Therefore, it behooves each of us to cultivate and guard our influence through which lives are shaped and destinies are altered.



HPD's Rebecca S. Follis (Alternative Dispute Resolution Unit) was promoted to the rank of sergeant at the April 2002 Promotion and Awards Ceremony. Joining her onstage are her children, Michael and Jessica.



Congratulations to the Houston Citizens' Police Academy Class #28. Graduates of the program have a greater knowledge of the functions within HPD's major units and a general overview of law enforcement.

This Month in HPD History: May

In May 1933, Mayor Oscar Holcombe created the Houston Department of Public Safety less than one month after taking office. Mayor Holcombe placed the Houston Police Department and the Houston Fire Department under a Director of Public Safety, thereby eliminating the offices of Chief of Police and Fire Chief. The first Director of Public Safety was George Wood. The Houston Police Department and the Houston Fire Department became divisions under the Department of Public Safety. Newspaper articles from that era document a series of promotions, demotions, and terminations including the designation of a police officer to the position of Senior Captain, the highest rank within the Police Division. Some employees sued the city for wrongful termination or unfair promotion practices, and some of their cases were heard by the Supreme Court for the State of Texas. Some historians believe that these events eventually lead to the formation of state civil service laws in 1948.

Project Safe Start Helps Houston Kids Kick-off Summer

As thousands of Houston area students prepare to wind down the school year, dozens of Houston Police officers and ministers will spring into action to make sure students stay safe and out of trouble in those final days at school.

Assistant Chief J.R. Jones (Criminal Investigations Command) has put the finishing touches on a security plan to be carried out by police officers from each patrol station and the Coalition of Ministers Against Crime. In this team effort that dates back to 1991, two ministers and two police officers will be assigned to each of the 74 school campuses that have been targeted as 'problem' or 'potential problem' schools.

Gang Task Force officers, Gang Units, Divisional Tactical Units, and appropriate bicycle patrols and foot patrols will be deployed during the daytime school hours of 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. The officers will work May 23-24 in the Spring Branch Independent School District targeted schools, May 29-30 in the Houston Independent School District and Fort Bend Independent School District, and June 6-7 at the North Forest Independent School District campuses.

The first coordinator for Project Safe Start was then Assistant Chief C.O. Bradford, now Chief of Police. Assistant Chief Jones began spearheading the effort in 1992. Chief Jones said the program has been a success each year since there have been no reports of violence or deaths at the schools. "Since Project Safe Start began, it is our belief that if not for the police and ministers presence, we would have experienced certain acts of violence on the targeted school campuses," Jones said.

A news conference will be held on May 23 to announce this year's Project Safe Start initiative.

HPD Presents 2002 Police Week Awards

The Houston Police Department observed Police Week during the week of May 13-17. The recipients of this year's Police Week awards were:

- Manager of the Year – Captain Richard D. Williams (Criminal Intelligence Division)
- Civilian Manager of the Year – Deputy Director Larry J. Yium (Budget and Finance)
- Mid-Manager of the Year – Lieutenant Douglas Perry, Jr. (Westside Division)
- Civilian Mid-Manager of the Year – Administration Specialist Debra L. Williams (Administration Coordinator Command)
- Supervisor of the Year – Sergeant William I. Stephens (Narcotics Division)
- Civilian Supervisor of the Year – Police Telecommunicator Supervisor Anna M. Hernandez (Emergency Communications Division)
- Officer of the Year – Officer Dana L. Wilkerson-Wyche (Northeast Division)
- Civilian Employee of the Year – Police Service Officer Jo Ann Celestine (Southeast Division)
- Rookie Officer of the Year – Officer Alberto Elizondo (Westside Division)
- Police Week Media Award – Radio Saigon Houston (KREH-AM) and La Semana Newspaper
- Police Week Corporate Award – Robert Ryan Realtors